



**DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling**

**For Your Information...**

## Setting Up A School Recycling Program

Whether you are a school administrator looking to reduce solid waste disposal costs, a teacher searching for a hands-on project for students, or a student wanting to know more about the environment, setting up a school recycling program may be the answer.

*Recycling and schools make a practically perfect partnership.*

A school recycling program provides a learning experience for everyone who participates. It is an education and awareness program about the how to's and why's of recycling and buying recycled. It is an environmental stewardship program. And it is a program that involves business decisions and markets.

So, what's the first thing to do when considering setting up a school recycling program? Well, there are many ways, but here are some recommendations to consider. First, obtain support from school or district administration.

Once approved, do your homework. What types of waste are you producing in school? In other words, what can be recycled? Aluminum cans? Plastic bottles? Office and notebook paper? Cardboard? Cafeteria waste? How much is being made? How often is it picked up? Who picks it up? The process of gathering this type of information is known as a waste audit – and you'll need the information for step two.

Step two is to contact your local recycling coordinator. They can answer questions like what is recycled in your community. Do residents have curbside pickup, drop-off sites or both? Who picks it up? The answers are important and may affect what you can or cannot collect at your school.

Here's why. If plastic bottles, aluminum cans and cardboard are accepted in your community's recycling program that means that you can collect the same recyclables at school.

It is important to remember that the collection of materials is only part of the solution. Somebody still has to pick up the recyclables, whether it's a school or parent volunteer or a professional solid waste management company that offers recycling services. Once the recyclables are picked up, they have to be processed and then made into something new.

Why is recycling important? Recycling is the right thing to do. Recycling saves natural resources, energy and valuable landfill space. The recycling program will divert recyclables from your school's waste stream. This should allow your school to reduce the number of pick-ups of garbage and perhaps even the size of the containers. If properly set up and managed, your school may save money and if the recycling program is implemented throughout the school district, the savings may be significant.

You've gotten approval. You know what to recycle. The necessary arrangements for the recyclables to be picked up have been made. Here are some tips to set up the program in your school:

- Educate, educate and educate. Make everyone aware of the school's recycling program. Use the school newspaper, announcements, Web page, e-mail, school handbook, school orientation and parent/teacher meetings. Update students and staff on the progress of the recycling program.



- Determine which recyclables are generated in different locations throughout the school. That will tell you the best place to locate your recycling bins. Here are some tips:
  - ▶ **Administrative offices** – paper, computer paper, cardboard and toner cartridges
  - ▶ **Classrooms** – notebook paper, plastic bottles and aluminum cans
  - ▶ **Cafeteria** – cardboard, steel cans, aluminum cans and plastic bottles
  - ▶ **Library** – paper, magazines, books and newspapers
  - ▶ **Vending areas** – aluminum cans and plastic bottles
  - ▶ **Parent or community meetings** – aluminum cans and plastic bottles
  - ▶ **Sporting events** – aluminum cans and plastic bottles
- Make sure your recycling bins are well marked to make sure the correct recyclable is placed in it. Consider restricted openings on lids – like round holes for plastic bottles or aluminum cans or slots

for paper - to reduce contamination (garbage or the wrong recyclables).

- Place recycling bins close to trash containers to make the choice to recycle easy.

DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling (Office) provides technical assistance, education programs and grant funding to schools regarding solid waste management issues including recycling, waste reduction and buying recycled. One of the Office's centerpiece projects is "Action for a cleaner tomorrow: A South Carolina Environmental Curriculum Supplement," a CD-ROM with lessons, videos and more for grades K-12.

In addition, the Office provides a Recycling Mini-Grant Program. Any public or private school may apply on its own or school districts may apply on behalf of their schools. Grant awards are competitive and funding is limited. The awards may vary from year to year but currently awards are made on a semi-annual basis. Schools may receive up to \$500 per grant cycle while school districts may not receive more than \$7,500 per fiscal year.

For more information about setting up a school recycling program, educational materials or grant information, please visit [www.scdhec.net/recycle](http://www.scdhec.net/recycle) or call **1-800-768-7348**.



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DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling FYIs provide general information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about solid waste issues, please call **1-800-768-7348** or visit our Web site at [www.scdhec.net/recycle](http://www.scdhec.net/recycle). Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.